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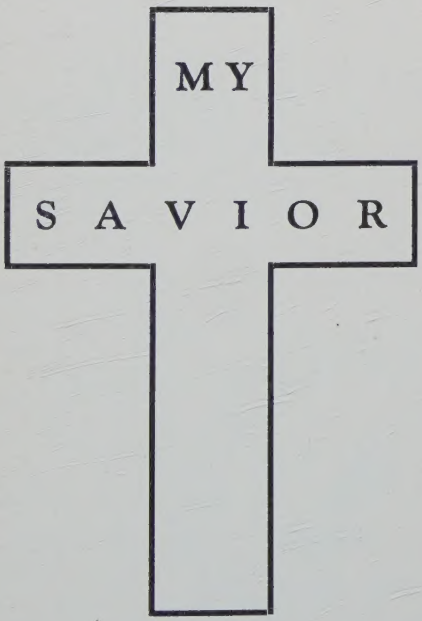
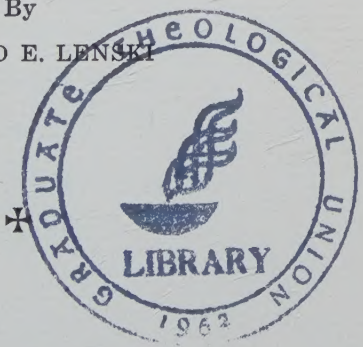

MY
SAVIOR

MY SAVIOR

A Series of Short Meditations and Prayers
Based on the Passion of Jesus
For Daily Use During the
Season of Lent

By
GERHARD E. LENSKI



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INTRODUCTORY

For the frequent use of the personal pronouns "I" and "my" in the following meditations and prayers the writer of these words offers no apology other than the explanation that the personal acceptance, on the part of each individual, of Jesus Christ as the Savior is both the test of the truth of the teachings of Jesus and, at the same time, the one means of attaining the salvation which He has brought.

It is good to be able to call Jesus Christ "The Savior." It is, however, a more fundamental and necessary experience for individuals to be able to call Him "My Savior." The careful quest of the scientist and scholar for new facts is always important, but so far as moral progress is concerned, such seeking is not as important as the humble acceptance of certain simple yet heart-stirring truths which have come to us from out the story of the cross which long ago was raised in the place called Calvary.

Better than many sacrifices placed upon

the proud altars of intellectual effort is the quiet obedience of each heart to that goodness which God poured out so freely upon mankind when He sent His Son into the world to be the Savior of all.

Lent is a season which invites the meditative mood with the saving work of Jesus as the very natural object of its consideration. Great is the profit which comes to the faithful worshiper who heeds this invitation. To begin, he may think of the salvation which Jesus brings as intangible and incomprehensible, but, studying it carefully, he shall soon know that it is the very thing for which his unknowing heart has always longed. Instead of Jesus being unapproachable and austere, He shall be found to be the truest realization of all that the Scripture has promised and also of all that the human heart, in its best moments, has ever intuitively felt to be true, holy and beautiful. Communing with Him in quiet moments day by day, the difficulties that harass the heart in its search for faith shall disappear. Bowing in spirit before the cross the ardent searcher for saving truth shall cry at last: "My Savior!"

Out of this inner experience new life shall come, redemption from sin and a quickened zeal for service, and such a zeal as shall not be abated until the banner of His salvation has been set up in all the kingdoms of this world.

Let the reader make the "I" and the "my" words in this volume his own and thereby let him claim his personal heritage of salvation!

Such is the admonition these words would give and the alluring prospect they are intended to hold out to all who read.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

GERHARD E. LENSKI.

MY SAVIOR

I. HIS SAVING PURPOSE

Ash Wednesday

1. Turning Toward the Cross

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." Luke 18: 31. Read also John 10: 27-31.

Meditation: Strange and unforgetable is the picture recurring Lent brings to mind, —Jesus, planting His foot firmly on the threshold of death,—Jesus, through mists of oncoming sorrow, determinedly turning toward the bitterness of the cross.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem!" After so many years of telling and retelling, what does this tragic tale mean to me? Do I understand it? Do I care to understand it? Am I drawing from it what He said He meant to give when He made Himself the chief participant in it? Because out of the heart are the issues of life and because, all too soon, the heart, neglected, supplants its higher affections with those

base and vile, therefore, let me examine myself anew this day as to what my thought toward Him may be.

Prayer: Father of all mercies, I thank Thee for the rich remembrance that Lent brings. I thank Thee for the opportunity it affords to rebuild the wasted affections of the heart. I thank Thee for the love of Jesus which it so clearly reveals. Enable me to live in the light of this love and always to serve Thee with a grateful heart, for His sake. Amen.

✠

Thursday

2. Superficiality as a Foe of Faith

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." I John 5: 20. Read also Matthew 7: 21-24.

Meditation: A modern writer says of Jesus: "Many have left Him because they never knew Him." Superficial knowledge is always dangerous to true spirituality. To have the form of fair words upon the

lips but not their meaning in the heart, to be wise in one's own conceit, to love that which is smart rather than that which is true—these are evidences of a superficiality that is inimical to faith. As the Master's follower, striving to understand Him, let me guard my heart against this foe. Let me beware of attempting to judge Him until I have honestly known Him. Above all, let me not turn away, following no higher guide than the vagrant foolish fancies of my own untutored heart.

Prayer: Great Searcher of all hearts, enable me to know myself as Thou dost know me and to avoid the pitfalls of my own pride and ignorance. Give me light within, a clean heart and a right spirit. In a deep and sure knowledge of Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent, let me find the life that is eternal. Amen.

✠

Friday

3. Words and Deeds

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. Read also Psalm 23.

Meditation: A good way to understand the saving purpose of Jesus is to examine His words in the light of His deeds. What Jesus taught in speech He wrought in action. He tells of the Good Shepherd—and when the eyes of men are opened they see He is the Good Shepherd. He enjoins love upon all—and He loves all, even His enemies. He praises the man who lays down his life for his friends—and straightway He surrenders His own for mankind. As I seek to understand Jesus let me note carefully this beautiful consistency linking words and deeds together. Let it be a kind of key that unlocks to me the meaning of all that He did. Let it be a kind of guiding star to show me the way I ought to go as I strive to follow Him.

Prayer: Thy love, O Christ, passeth all human understanding. Thou art the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep. All that Thou dost ask of me and infinitely more in service and sacrifice Thou hast first done for me. Draw me heavenward by Thy love, and let Thy mercy be my trust and stay forever. Amen.

Saturday

4. The Father's Love

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." John 3:16. Read also Luke 15:11-24.

Meditation: The saving purpose of Jesus is set forth in the picture He presents of a saving God. What a picture that is! Not that of a cold, cruel Deity who exacts penalties which the guilty cannot pay, but that of a Father tender toward all, even toward the wayward and the wicked. Let men not fear their Father. Let them trust Him. Let them dare to believe that His love will not shun even bitter sacrifice on their behalf. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Let me ponder these gracious words when the weariness of the day weighs heavily upon me. Let me find in them the joy and the uplift He so plainly meant them to bring to me.

Prayer: Father of all, — my Father, — let me employ this tender address with all

the confidence and boldness that becomes the child of Thy love. I am the object of Thy affection, the burden of Thy heart. Thou knowest all my need. Thou hast made ample provision for it. Upon Thee will I lean and in Thee will I trust now and for all coming days. Hear my prayer, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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First Sunday in Lent

5. Love as a Key-Word

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it." Luke 19: 41. Read also Hosea 14: 1-9.

Meditation: "If you would help my Soudanese," once said General Gordon to a band of missionaries, "you must learn to love them." Behind all true and genuinely helpful service there must be the warm, pulsating heart of love. It is the fuel of love that alone can feed the flames of self-sacrifice. The most elaborate schemes for human uplift and the most energetic campaigns for saving the fallen and the lost quickly degenerate into a meaningless and mechanical performance

if love is not there to vitalize them, to quicken them and to give them meaning. Keightley, the English divine, strikes a deep note when he says: "When we trace things back we see that love commands the fountains which quicken life. Until love speaks the waters of devotion are sealed, but once she has uttered her voice nothing can stay them in their impetuous course."

The saving purpose of Jesus becomes luminous and meaningful as we witness His tears in behalf of wayward Jerusalem and as we measure the love that lay behind them. Because He loved so deeply His heart felt so keenly the spiritual rebellion of His people. Because love had mastered His soul, therefore, though the errand seemed to be doomed to failure, He determined to enter the city anew and to plead again for the repentance that leads to God.

Love is the key-word that unlocks the meaning of the cross. Separated from love, the cross is even more than a mystery; it becomes a sordid tragedy involving ignorance, the worst perversity and a costly devotion which, after all, was misplaced and ought never to have been. But

illumined with the light of love, the cross becomes the hope of the world. It tells us that behind the apparently passionless scheme of things there beats a heart warm with love's overwhelming power. It tells us that while we were yet in our sins God loved us and determined to claim us as His own. It tells us that, mightier than the years, more patient and persistent than the daylight which pursues the dawn, is the saving purpose of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Prayer: My heart is often weary and sore distressed with the cares of the day. What is my life? Why am I a partner to this ceaseless struggle which none can avoid or understand? I grow restive and querulous and downcast as I consider these things. But today, on this day of rest and peace which Thou hast made, I see a new light upon my pathway,—the light of Thy love in Jesus Christ. The day may be ever so dark,—all will be light within because Thou hast set Thy heart upon me. The way may be long and weary, —all will be well with me because Thou wilt never leave me nor forsake me. Let such confidence as this be the rest that my

soul seeks and finds today, through Jesus Christ my Savior. Amen.

"The colored sunsets and the starry heavens, the beautiful mountains and the shining seas, the fragrant woods and painted flowers are not half so beautiful as a soul that is serving Jesus out of love in the wear and tear of common, unpoetic life."—(*Faber.*)

✠

Monday

6. A New Spirit in the Heart

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."—Matthew 6: 33. Read also Psalm 51.

Meditation: Lord Avebury says: "The main object of religion is not to get a man into heaven, but to get heaven into him." This statement may be understood as describing one phase of the saving purpose of Jesus. By putting a new spirit into men Jesus would make all things new. By supplanting lust, pride, malice and unbelief with purity, faith, love and joy, He would lift men out of the rut of sin and self and place their feet upon the firm

foundations of righteousness. Let me listen to His earnest words spoken upon the mount, within the shadow of the temple and in the quietness of the upper room; let me think of those words as spoken, not only to the disciples, but also to me. Is not this the service He seeks to perform for me, to get me into heaven by first getting heaven into me?

Prayer: Kind, patient Teacher of wayward hearts, with what winning words dost Thou tell me of those things which belong unto my peace! Let all other voices be silent and let Thy voice alone speak to me. Let Thy truth lead and guide me. And as Thou speakest let a teachable spirit be mine that I may bow before Thee, saying: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Amen.

Tuesday

7. Called to Serve

"And Jesus saw Simon and Andrew and He saith unto them, Follow Me." Matthew 4: 18, 19. Read also Luke 5: 1-12.

Meditation: Jesus purposes to save men by summoning them from unworthy pursuits and occupations into the rich usefulness of a life like His own. I look back and I see Him as He walks along the shores of Galilee. Rough and untutored are the fishermen He seeks out. His words sink into their souls. Led by His example, inspired by His goodness, they become changed men. I see them after the years have run on. They have become heroes, martyrs, saints, humanity's best benefactors, noble souls of whom the world is not worthy. Such salvation as this is not a lazy thing. How different it is from any mere pious idleness or sanctified ecstasy that rejoices in its own goodness while the rest of the world may be going to perdition. In the light of what the disciples did, let me think of the salvation He brings to me. Am I willing to be saved by Him—saved in order that, like them, I may serve?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I hear Thy voice calling me across the years. Thou dost call me from all vain pursuits into the usefulness of a life like Thine own. Thou dost challenge my soul to spend and to be

spent for Thee. Give me courage that now, before the night comes, I may answer and say: "Lo, I have left all to follow Thee." Amen.

✠

Wednesday

8. Sin's Deadliness

"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." Matthew 5: 29. Read also Matthew 5: 21-27.

Meditation: No honest consideration of Jesus' salvation ideal for men can fail to note His attitude toward sin. Plainer words have never been spoken on any subject than those He spoke on this subject. Fierce is the flame of His wrath against this enemy. There is no sacrifice too great to make in order that life may be delivered from it. Let no man deceive himself in regard to sin. Its nature is not changed by any sophistry the wise may practise on their own souls. A new name and a scientific definition do not alter its deadly character. There can be no happiness here and no hope for the hereafter

so long as its sway is unbroken. These stern statements are all logical and natural deductions from His words to me. They are hard for me to hear, harder still to put to practice in my life. But with His help I will try.

Prayer: O Thou who art all holiness and who dost also remember the frailty of man, have compassion on my weakness. Cleanse my heart of all those things for which my conscience is afraid. Deliver me from all secret faults. Let the intent of my heart be to serve Thee, and, though certain sins linger, let that desire please Thee, and let it lead me to final forgiveness, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

✠

Thursday

9. His Gift of Peace

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." John 14: 27. Read also Psalm 46.

Meditation: Peace is a great part of the salvation Jesus came to bring. And let my weary heart not fail to note exactly

what is conveyed in the promise He makes. "My peace I give unto you!" "My peace!" Think of His patience under provocation, of His quiet serenity when all about Him were disturbed; of His readiness in emergencies; of the mighty calm like that of the sea that sustained Him in the end. And this peace, rooted in the ageless goodness of God, this is freely offered me! If acceptance of the gift seems difficult, let me think again of the value of the gift. Let me think of my need of it, how without peace human life must ever be a thing at war with itself. More than any gift of outward prosperity I need the inner wealth of a spirit like His. With this gift and only with it can I face life's trials and remain unafraid.

Prayer: Pour into my anxious, troubled heart Thy gift of peace, Thou who art forever the Prince of Peace. Thou didst unfalteringly trust in the Father's goodness and Thou didst never come to grief or defeat. Help me to trace Thy steps, to do Thy will, to overcome my foes. Thus may I maintain quietness of mind, courage, and good hope. Hear my prayer for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Friday

10. The Reality of Forgiveness

"But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins . . ." Matthew 9:6. Read also Luke 18:9-14.

Meditation: Jesus might have tried to bring men wealth and worldly power; but such gifts, while much sought after, mean little over against the wealth of a heart that rests securely in the love of God and the power of a conscience that has been cleansed and is therefore unafraid. How well has wise old Thomas à Kempis seized upon this truth when he says: "They that follow their own lusts stain their consciences and lose the grace of God. But thou shalt rest sweetly if thy heart condemn thee not." There is a more convincing proof of the blessed reality of divine forgiveness than even the sight of the miracles of mercy which Jesus performed, —the proof that comes to my heart when, turning from the evil I hate, I have looked to Him and have cried: "For Thy mercy's sake, Lord, forgive me!"

Prayer: Gracious God, Thou who hast created the heart and who knowest the subtle power of sin over it, give me the will and the strength to look to Him whom Thou hast sent to me to be the promise and the reality of forgiveness. Give me a repentant heart and a conscience which is unafraid because it is clean. In Jesus' name I make my prayer to Thee. Amen.

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Saturday

11. The Privilege of Prayer

"Lord, teach us to pray." Luke 11: 1. Read also Matthew 6: 1-16.

Meditation: Prayer is precious though its practise is often perverted and its privilege neglected. Prayer is a pathway to peace. It is an open door by which I may enter into all the richness of that fuller life and that salvation which Jesus came to bring. Some one has said: "Prayer is exposing one's spirit to the vision of God." The saint of yesterday speaks both with wisdom and with promise when he advises: "If thou wilt with-

draw thyself from speaking vainly and from gadding idly, as also from hearkening after novelties and rumors, thou shalt find leisure enough and suitable for meditation and good things. Leave vain things to the vain; but be thou intent upon the things which God hath commanded thee. Shut thy door upon thee and call upon Jesus, thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy closet; for thou shalt not find so great peace anywhere else."

Prayer: The busy world is calling and my life is crowded with a multitude of cares. Even so, Lord Jesus, let me not forget Thee. Teach my lips the language of prayer and my heart the art of communion with Thee. Let peace dwell within the temple of my heart because God is its altar of devotion and Thou art its light and glory. Amen.

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The Second Sunday in Lent

12. Things Eternal

"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told

you." John 14: 2. Read also John 11: 21-46.

Meditation: The thought of things eternal, like the motif of an opera, underlies and permeates the teaching of Jesus and the salvation He offers. He does not argue for the reality of a future life: He takes it for granted and He does not ever withdraw His assumption. And more than that, life is meaningful and serious because, as He indicates, its present phases all are steps leading to a fuller realization of the weal or woe of human destinies.

With Jesus the thought of the life that lies beyond, instead of being a matter of mystery and fear, is a source of joy and inspiration. In His hands it is a mighty deterrent to turn men from evil. Again and again the inference from His teachings is that men would find it easier by far to resist present evil if they but thought how, when once evil has been committed, they must carry with them, not only the physical consequences of their deed for a while, but also the remembrance of its injustice so long as memory shall last.

The thought of the eternal kingdom is the basis of saving hope in the heart of

the faithful Christian, according to the word of Jesus. In this world justice is not always fully done and the righteous must often suffer in silence and in patience. Life is often a tangled, sorry affair in spite of our best efforts to bring order and system into it. Let men, in the face of such difficulties, not yield to despair. Let them not pause in their efforts to serve God and to better the world. Let them labor and pray and hope to the very end. Let the strength of their hope be this. In vaster spheres than any that earth can measure goodness shall finally enter and claim the victory. God's kingdom is an eternal kingdom. He has sent His Son, not to lead forlorn hosts of defeated men down to the sorrow and oblivion of nameless graves; but to strengthen those who struggle, to strengthen them by the courage of His own example and by His own glorious triumph over all His foes.

Prayer: O Thou who art above all the change and decay of passing time, eternal God, forever the same, I lift my heart to Thee, asking Thee to bind it close to Thine own. Men may change. Friends may disappoint. The world may lose its charm.

My heart, resting its hope in Thee, shall never taste the bitterness of doubt or defeat. Pain may endure for a while, but the day shall come, fairer than earthly Sabbath I have known, when I shall see Thee as Thou art and in Thee shall find more of joy and good than I have ever known or sought. Hear my prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"I know not how that Bethlehem's Babe
Could in the God-head be;
I only know the Manger Child
Has brought God's life to me.

"I know not how that Calvary's cross
A world from sin could free:
I only know its matchless love
Has brought God's love to me.

"I know not how that Joseph's tomb
Could solve death's mystery:
I only know a living Christ,
Our immortality"—(*Farrington*).

II. MEN WHOM HE COULD NOT SAVE

Monday

13. "Because Their Deeds Were Evil"

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19. Read also Luke 14:16-24.

Meditation: In spite of His saving purpose, so benign, so patient, so far-reaching, there were those recreant souls with whom Jesus came in close contact and whom He could not save. The Scripture uses the expression "the mystery of iniquity." There is a deep mystery in human iniquity. The story of these individuals sets it forth. Why did they choose the evil when the good lay so close at hand? How, for instance, could Judas work the will of the Jewish leaders in preference to the will of Jesus? This mystery is great and yet, in spite of its darkness, certain truths, like beacon-lights, flash forth from

it to furnish needful guidance for me today. These men chose evil in preference to good, *but not* because they could not have chosen good, and *not* because He did not invite them so to do! Light was there, —they could have walked in it;—contrary to His desire, they chose the darker way!

Prayer: Deliver me, mighty God, from all false choices and from all tendencies to trifle with sin. Plant my feet upon the right path and let me walk thereon even unto the end, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

✠

Tuesday

14. The Nature of Sin

"When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." James 1: 15. Read also Acts 5: 1-12.

Meditation: A Brooklyn judge, sentencing a banker who had wantonly abused the public trust, recently said he could not understand how a man's character could have disintegrated so completely as this man's had done without his knowing it and without his hating himself for it. To the judge this may seem strange, but in reality

it is common experience. Lust, if encouraged, brings forth sin, and sin works so silently that its disintegrating power is scarcely seen until too late. By degrees men slip down the moral ladder. Meanwhile, like the banker, they may lift high their heads and assert their honesty in a spirit of pride. Or, like Judas, they may become bold and impudent in deeds which their consciences should hate. Sin,—let me learn its nature here,—is a trickster. Its hand is often quicker than my eye. I think, when I have yielded to sin, that I have deceived the world, and I find invariably that it is sin that has deceived me.

Prayer: Guard me, O God, from sins that deceive me. Let me never think that any sin is hidden from Thee or that I have concealed any fault beyond finding out. Renew in me a daily warfare against evil. Seeking victory, let me find it in Thee, through Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen.

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Wednesday

15. Sowing and Reaping

"Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of

perdition." John 17: 12. Read also Galatians 6: 7-10.

Meditation: We must not make the fate of Judas more of a mystery than it is. To be sure, Jesus foresaw very clearly the ruin of Judas. Jesus even pronounced the doom of Judas in advance. How could Jesus do this? He understood the binding, blinding power of sin as men do not. He saw how, if a man takes one step into sin, a second step often becomes both easy and inevitable. Judas was hearing each day the most appealing, compelling, heart-stirring reasons for righteousness, — and he was daily frustrating and despising them. Jesus saw the inevitable end of such a course. After all, shall a man not reap what he persists in sowing? And shall not I, as well, on the basis of the choices I make today, be able to prophesy, at least to a degree, my own final fate even as Jesus once did that of His disciple Judas?

Prayer: Make me keen and quick and careful to judge myself, O Thou who art the great Judge of all. May I never blame fate for that which my own folly has wrought. And when I have fallen, instead

of excusing or defending sin, may I never delay in seeking the forgiveness which Thou hast purchased for me at an infinite cost. Amen.

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Thursday

16. Idle Curiosity

"And Herod . . . hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." Luke 23: 11. Read also Matthew 11: 20-25.

Meditation: There is a sincere interest in religion which, like a tide taken at the full, carries the soul forward to the glories of complete salvation. And there is, at the same time, an idle curiosity in the matter which may easily become the soul's ruin. To seek amusement rather than self-improvement in worship; to be regaled rather than ruled by the teachings of Christ; to be curious in a flippant way rather than honestly God-loving and God-seeking,—these practices bespeak a wayward soul placing itself beyond the pale of redeeming grace. In that connection, let me study anew the interest of Herod in religion, then my own. Let me beware of any

tendency to try to turn into some form of cheap amusement that great outreach of God's love which cost Him the life of His Son.

Prayer: Jesus, Savior, let my love for Thee be a burning flame that shall purge from my heart all that displeases Thee. Guard me against sins that seem not to be sins at all. Make me to love the light of sincerity, to walk and to persevere in it until night's shadows shall flee and morning comes, the morning of joy with Thee. Amen.

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Friday

17. The Call of Conscience

"For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him . . . for Herodias' sake." Matthew 14: 3. Read also Romans 1: 28-32.

Meditation: An unknown writer has said: "Following a path of least resistance makes both rivers and men crooked." Perhaps in some such comparison the disintegration of Herod can be traced. Herod had a conscience,—yes. But Herod continually

did the easy rather than the right thing. Again and again he stifled conscience in the interest of passing pleasure or temporary advantage. Finally, on the day when Jesus stood before him as a prisoner, though he sought their advice, he found those sacred lips locked in silence and unwilling to waste a word on him. After all, we cannot stifle conscience and keep it, too. Still less, can we continually flout the Savior and then, in the end, be able to summon Him to our side to serve and to save us.

Prayer: Great and good, O God, my Creator, is the gift of conscience Thou hast given. So still and small its voice, yet its call reaches across land and sea. May I never evade this call. Hearing it, may I lift my heart to Thee to inquire: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Amen.

Saturday

18. Words of Rebuke

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Matthew 23: 14. Read also Matthew 26: 57, 59-68.

Meditation: The sermon I like least is likely to be the very one I need most. The sermon that burns up my assumed righteousness, that cuts to shreds my pretended piety, that wounds most mercilessly my well acted holiness,—oh, I will not like that sermon! Yet, if it honestly rebukes my sin, it is the very sermon I need. The Scribes and Pharisees, the priests and the leaders of the people went astray at this point. They did not have the moral courage to receive the pointed preaching of Jesus. Instead of accepting its truth, they conspired together to kill Him. In so doing they set the seal of ruin upon their own souls more completely than any deed of actual crime might ever have done. But wait,—how well do I receive plain preaching? If Jesus spoke to me as He spoke to them would I repent or would I start a conspiracy?

Prayer: Thy words of rebuke, O Lord, are hard for me to bear. Like sharp arrows Thy condemnations wound my soul. I am not as good as I know I should be and yet, with what reluctance do I heed Thy summons to repent and to return to Thee. Long have I waited and turned aside. Now

let me turn to Thee, to heed Thy call and to consecrate my heart to Thee. Amen.

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The Third Sunday in Lent

19. Superficial Religion

"This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15: 8-10. Read also Isaiah 1: 11-21.

Meditation: Superficial religion! This is the culprit Jesus indicts in the verse above. There is a marvelous rythm, a truly poetical flow even in the translated rendition given us of this verse. But even so, all the poetry in the world, coupled with sweetest music, cannot take out of these words the hot contempt and disgust their Speaker, the Savior, feels toward those who are the possessors of superficial religion.

These Jews had inherited the religion of honored men, the commandments of Moses, the psalms of David, the prophecies

of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea. They used the words of these, their spiritual ancestors, just as though they were the breathings of their own hearts. The trouble came in at this point: they had the words of Moses and Isaiah but not their spirit. They said what they said because it sounded well and not because they knew their words were true or because they meant to honor them in their lives. Theirs was a borrowed, an inherited faith. It lacked substance and sincerity. That was bad enough to begin with, but when they began to palm off this religion as though it were perfection itself, then it was that Jesus met them in the way and in blistering words told them how superficial they really were. Thus was the feud engendered which ended with the cross.

Luccock of Yale characterizes modern church life as being fonder of "outward commotion than of inward renewal." He suggests that the "commotion of saints" might be a more accurate expression than the age-honored phrase in our creed, "the communion of saints." Yes, a great part of our religious activity is often nothing more than commotion, the excitement of speech, the froth of words. There is a

great noise, like the beating of a drum,—and often the louder the noise the less behind it to recommend sincerity and truth. "We think we are not worshipping unless we are overflowing with words," says another critic.

In such an age and day, what of my worship? I see an altar; I see God's minister before it; I see the morning sunlight filtering through stained-glass windows and bathing God's house in a haze of heavenly glory; do I see anything more? Do I see Him, the eternal Christ reaching out helping hands to me? Do I see a Father's love, —my Father's,—working with me day by day, guarding my feet lest they stumble, guiding my heart lest it should lose the light?

Is mine superficial religion, or is it the sacrificial religion of sincerity and truth?

Prayer: What dost Thou require of those who would worship Thee, O Thou mighty and eternal God, whose glory fills the heavens? Thou dost not ask songs like those when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Thou dost not demand the harmonies of the

redeemed like the voice of many waters mingled with the music of harps. One thing Thou dost ask,—a heart that loves Thee with sincerity. Oh, may that heart be mine! Then, even though words fail and faltering lips never are able to utter the heart's deep desire, Thou shalt know me as Thy child and all my worship shall be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight. So may it be, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"God would rather hear a man's own honest, stumbling, even stupid speech than to listen to a recitation of some eloquent utterance made of old by St. Thomas à Kempis or St. Catherine. It is a safe thing to say that no one ever found much joy in praying until he began talking to God for himself."—(*Bell.*)

Monday

20. The Outward Appearance

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda and Simon?" Mark 6: 3. Read also John 1: 4-15.

Meditation: One reason why Jesus failed to become Israel's Savior was because her people were looking for a worldly rather than a spiritual ruler. Their eyes were fastened on thrones and purple robes and armies marching in triumphal procession. The glory of Rome rather than the goodness of heaven was the ideal of their hearts. How, under such circumstances, could they accept plain-garbed Jesus with His crude fishermen friends and His continual interest in poor people? As for believing that beneath so unpretentious an exterior there dwelt the fullness of an eternal Sonship with God, is not the simple statement of the situation an ample explanation for all the unbelief that finally came forth to meet it? How easily do those deceive themselves who depend too much on the outward appearance of things! True indeed, but, placed as they were, judging as they were compelled to do, would my judgment have been truer, kinder, better than theirs?

Prayer: Immortal Love, Thou who dost outweary human sin by Thy patience and Thy mercy, let me never fall from Thee because I have been blinded by the glitter of things temporal and have failed to see

the glory of things eternal. Thy cross is humble,—too humble for proud hearts to receive it. Let me receive it, and rejoice in it, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

✠

Tuesday

21. Presumptuous Ignorance

"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." John 9:41. Read also Hosea 4:1-7.

Meditation: There is no ignorance so presumptuous and cruel as that which flouts wisdom and yet dares to call itself wise. In fact, as the revealing years have run on, we have come to learn that one of the marks of the truly wise is their willingness to confess their ignorance in a spirit of humility and to accept instruction, while one of the marks of the ignorant is their prejudice and their cruelty. How little was that temple-coterie of scribes and Pharisees a match for Jesus on any field, and yet, in spite of many defeats, with what persistence and impudence did they dare to attack Him every chance they had. The

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religion of Jesus is not the foe of wisdom or science, but it does have in it principles that aggravate hearts that love themselves too much in a spirit of pride. Coming down to modern times and terms, it is not religion and science that have a quarrel. Much rather is it a case of ignorance still fighting against truth and pride refusing to know Him who was ever the humblest of men.

Prayer: Thou art the truth, blessed Master, though Thy garments are plain and stained with dust and there is none to do Thee homage. Because Thou art the truth, let me serve Thee at every cost, even as Thou didst also serve me. Amen.

✠

Wednesday

22. Dangerous Indecision

"Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?" John 18: 38. Read also Luke 11: 17-27.

Meditation: There are some issues in life which cannot be evaded, changed or compromised, some of which allow no postponement, no time for reflection, no appeal

for a change of court or for some higher judgment. They must be settled on the spot and settled with a decisive "Yes" or "No." The man who has not yet learned how to face such issues is sincerely to be pitied. Indecision will ruin him. Events will conspire to destroy him. Was it not Pilate's failure to recognize this fact that led him to become a partner to the death of Jesus to his own name's eternal hurt? Has not Dickens, in one of his stories, given us a description which fits Pilate well when he writes: "The sun rose; it rose upon no sadder sight than that of the man of good abilities and good emotions, incapable of their directed exercise, incapable of his own help and happiness, sensible of the blight upon him and resigning himself to let it eat him away!"

Prayer: However painful and expensive it may be, help me, Strong Son of God, to make right decisions and always to cling to them. Give me Thy strength and courage. Then shall my lips never falter and my heart shall not fail. Then shall my "Yes" given Thee be "Yes" indeed, an affirmation of devotion that shall bind my life to Thine forever. Amen.

Thursday

23. Self-Condemnation

"Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man." John 23: 4. Read also Luke 20: 19-27.

Meditation: From the lips of various individuals, some in no sense the friends and followers of Jesus, has come, strangely enough, the highest commendation for Him. Think of Pilate, hard pressed by the rabble to condemn Jesus, defending his prisoner and asserting the latter's innocence of any wrong. In the light of such an admission, however, how great the guilt of Pilate becomes in finally allowing Jesus to be crucified! How, in any future court, when Jesus shall sit on the judgment seat and *he* shall stand as a prisoner at the bar, will he ever be able to justify the thing he did? If Pilate is a type of the unsaved, then surely those who have known Jesus and have not yielded their lives to His saving purpose, have only themselves to blame. How can any man,—how can I,—ask to be protected by the goodness which, when once

it was clearly recognized, Pilate-fashion, has been wantonly sacrificed and despised?

Prayer: There is a straight and narrow path that leads to life eternal and those who walk thereon must walk in the light afforded them. Lead my steps along this path, O Jesus, my Keeper and my Guide. Walk with me day by day until the far-off goal comes near and uncertain hopes shall become heavenly realities. Amen.

✠

Friday

24. Perverted Religion

"The high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy." Matthew 26: 65. Read also Matthew 23: 29-35.

Meditation: Caiaphas, the high priest, was the mortal foe of Jesus. With an air of great righteousness, with bold determination, with dignity and yet with unmatched deadliness, he set himself to the ignoble task of destroying Him whom he, as high priest, should have worshipped and served. Some say his enmity was so bitter because, in cleansing the temple, Jesus had hurt the revenues that flowed into the

priestly pocketbook. Whatever the explanation may be, perverted religion is bad. It is a power unto evil that brooks no restraint. It sets the soul on fire with the fire of hell and, seemingly, nothing can curb or quench the flame it spreads. Caiaphas, so respectable and yet so bitter, shows me a strange peril that still threatens human hearts, how piqued pride can turn to deadly passion, and how the love of earthly advantage can cause men to err from the truth and to drown themselves in perdition and destruction.

Prayer: Let me never turn from Thee, O Christ, because Thy truth, plainly put, has stung my pride or because I have yielded too much to the love of earthly wealth. Whatever the cost may be, let me pay it. And may my spirit partake of that same willingness that was Thine when Thou didst give Thyself so freely for me. Amen.

✠

Saturday

25. His Righteousness

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . righteous-

ness." I Corinthians 1:30. Read also John 6:48-59.

Meditation: How poor the world would be if men had only what their hands had created and if they were unwilling to profit by the sacrifices of yesterday. In a deeper sense man is a spiritual pauper and poor beyond redemption if the only righteousness he has is that which he himself has won. The old expression, "Clothed in the righteousness of Christ," sounds strange and foreign in our modern ears. And yet, behind its strangeness a great truth is hidden. What Christ once was willing to do for men does become righteousness in the lives of those who receive Him by faith. His saving power is power indeed. He does lift life to higher levels. He does save. If men are not saved by Him today that is solely because they have resisted the appeal of His love or because they have despised the grace and the truth which He demonstrates so convincingly and offers so freely.

Prayer: Gracious God, Thou whose mercy is my soul's hope, bear with me as, amid much doubt and hesitation, I seek the righteousness that is pleasing to Thee. For-

give my delay, my backsliding, my sin. Lift high the cross before my eyes. Let its power come to me to turn my face toward Thee and to claim and keep my heart for heaven, through Him who, for my sake, once suffered thereon. Amen.

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The Fourth Sunday in Lent

26. The Kindness of Jesus

"How often would I . . . and ye would not." Matthew 23: 37. Read also Matthew 11: 20-30.

Meditation: The kindness of Jesus toward those whom He met in the way and whom He could not save is almost as illuminating and comforting to the struggling soul as is His display of grace toward those whom He did save. Recall one after another the names of those recreant personalities who insulted His goodness by their rebellion against Him: — Judas, Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, the leaders of the people, the ignorant and misled rabble. What an uninviting task to begin with was

that which called for the conversion of these hard hearts! And yet, how courageously and unsparingly did Jesus give Himself to that task. In some instances, notably that of Herod and Caiaphas, it seems that Jesus reached a point where He refused to give any further appeal. But when we analyze the conditions involved we see that it is not a case of Jesus refusing any help that might have saved, but that men have seared their consciences with the fires of sin so that they have become insensible to any grace that might be given. Perhaps, in these cases, the silence of Jesus together with the tragedy that looked forth from His eyes is a more eloquent appeal for repentance than many words might have been. Perhaps, if judgment is already sealed, the only kindness that can be shown is that which Jesus shows, that of silence.

Behind the fiercest castigation Jesus ever gave there was always the warmth of kindness, the longing of love and a saving purpose. How mighty are the woes He pronounces on Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. As we read them we seem to feel the ground reeling and rocking under our feet. But read a few verses more. Now,

we hear words the tenderness of which far surpasses even that of the loveliest lullaby sung by a mother to her sleeping child. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . ."

John Baillie, in his attempt to clarify the doctrine of the atonement for modern minds, has a paragraph worthy of the pen of a great poet. He writes: "When our Lord found a man in the bonds of sin, the deepest feeling aroused in His soul was, quite apparently, not anger, not blame, not a desire to punish, not a scandalized shrinking, not a comfortable sense of His own moral superiority, but an ache to redeem. He must, by the countervailing power of His love, break the hold which sin has over man's will. He must get the man back for goodness and for God." Yes, "the ache to redeem" was in His heart, a mighty urge that gave Him no rest day or night. In this respect how kind He is, how much kinder than men have ever known how to be. When all has been said and done, there is but one power that can save, —and Jesus has that power,—

"The patience of immortal love
Outwearying my sin."

Even in the case of those whom He could not save, He reveals this love and proves Himself the Savior indeed.

Prayer: Great and mighty God, whom heaven and earth adore, I thank Thee today for Thy love so clearly revealed in Him whom Thou hast sent to be the Savior of all. Earth hath love, but none like Thine. Human hearts are tender, but of themselves they know no tenderness like that which Thou dost show. I rest my soul on Thy love. In this I find peace and hope. May Thy love never be crowded out of my life by any carelessness or sin on my part. May it keep me calm and unfearing until the end, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

III. MEN WHOM HE SAVED

Monday

27. The Repentance of Peter

"And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Luke 22: 62. Read also John 21: 15-18.

Meditation: The thing that broke the heart of Peter and that melted his pride to penitential tears,—what was it? Not argument or rebuke or punishment. It was that look that Jesus gave him as the trial in the high priest's hall was ending. One look, a look of sad surprise, we may be sure, a look of prayerful anxiety, a look that brought back to Peter's mind all the sacrifice that Jesus had endured and was to endure for his sake. In the remembrance of that look Peter felt a love so mighty and pure that he hated himself for the unworthiness he had shown. Understanding this change in the heart of Peter, we are bound to understand better what John Baillie means when he says: "Surely then our

religion is right in holding that vicarious suffering is the most irresistible force that anywhere exists in the spiritual world for the destruction of evil."

Prayer: Let me remember, dear Master and Savior, that those same eyes of sorrow that gazed on Peter are still fastened on me. Thou dost not look upon me to frighten or to chide me, but to recall me from the error of my way and to do me good in Thy kindest manner. Like Peter, let me turn to Thee and find forgiveness, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

✠

Tuesday

28. None Other Name

"Neither is there salvation in any other." Acts 4: 12. Read also Acts 2: 14, 38-42.

Meditation: However we may interpret the salvation of Jesus, we must all, with our varying creeds, agree that He saved Peter. Apart from Jesus, Peter's name would never have been written on history's pages. He would have lived and died in obscurity; he would have been nothing

more than an empty boaster, a loud talker, a noisy but ineffectual fellow. Jesus saved Peter. He gave Peter all the goodness Peter ever possessed. He enabled Peter to become a preacher of righteousness with a flaming zeal that set many hearts afire for God. If in some fair land beyond summer skies the soul of Peter lives on in goodness and in glory the explanation for it all is spelled in one word,—the sweetest that ever fell on human ear,—the name, Jesus!

Prayer: Better than all argument in behalf of salvation is the example of one soul whom Thou, gracious God, hast saved through Him whom Thou hast sent to be the Savior of all. Let the salvation of such souls be the inspiration of my soul. Let it whisper to me the blessed truth that the Savior still calls and that His mighty hand is outstretched to save. Amen.

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Wednesday

29. The Grave Doubt Digs

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall

be damned." Mark 16:16. Read also John 20:24-30.

Meditation: The patience of Jesus toward the doubt of Thomas may well serve to teach us a needful lesson. Doubt in the heart of man is not a foe to be taken lightly. It is deserving of sympathetic attention. If the first task to which the risen Savior gives Himself upon His return to His own is the cure of the doubt of Thomas, then shall not all elders bear patiently with questioning youth? Shall not all parents gladly teach their children? And shall not all Christians be ready to give every man who asks them a reason for the hope that is in them? Jesus saved Thomas from doubt; and the grave that doubt digs is often as deep as that which sin makes. Shall I not remember and, in all my dealings with those who do not know Him as the Savior, shall I not seek to show forth in Christlike words and deeds the sweet reasonableness of my faith in Him?

Prayer: Deliver me from devastating doubt as well as from sin and shame, O Jesus, Lover of my soul. Teach me how to test the truth and to arrive at certainty.

And when I have done this, then, to Thy gift of certainty, add that of patient love that I may gladly lead others in the way even as Thou, so patiently, hast led me. Amen.

✠

Thursday

30. The Pathway to Truth

"If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8: 31, 32. Read also II Timothy 1: 7-15.

Meditation: Huxley is reported to have advised: "Give unqualified assent to no propositions but those the truth of which is so clear and distinct they cannot be doubted." There is no right-minded man who would ever quarrel with this statement. But in the face of this statement, however, one may well wonder how Huxley and others of his school have dared to assert propositions which were not clear and distinct to the utter disregard and even denial of spiritual truths which, since the

days of Jesus, have been turning the world upside down. There is a better way to arrive at certainty than to walk the path of persistent doubt, as Huxley suggests. Let men make honest experiment with life according to the teachings of Him who is life. Let them continue as disciples in His Word and they shall know the truth and the truth shall make them free.

Prayer: Great Creator of the human heart, Thou who knowest its eager questionings and its blighting doubts, lead me in the way of faith even as Jesus led His disciples of old. As real as anything my eye can see is the power of Thy grace upon me. Let this grace continue its work in me until all questionings are gone and doubts dispelled and salvation is won, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Friday

31. His Mother

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother." John 19: 25. Read also Luke 2: 41-52.

Meditation: How tenderly does the disciple John portray the last meeting of Mary and Jesus as Calvary's sun is slowly going down. With what modest restraint does John tell of the commission he received at that time to become the caretaker of bereft Mary. In that connection think of Jesus and His mother. Mary did much for Jesus, but not as much as Jesus did for Mary. The solicitude of Jesus as it is here displayed has served to throw a mantle of protection about all womankind. Since the days of Jesus the sons of men have been kinder to their mothers, and the lot of woman has been vastly improved. An accident? Not at all. His love is over the whole scheme of life, mellowing hard hearts, driving selfishness away, in strange and yet often in the simplest ways leading all souls who are willing to be persuaded into that higher life that is a foretaste and promise of heaven itself.

Prayer: Come into my heart,—come into my home, blessed Jesus, and let the sweet fragrance of Thy kindness and tenderness dispel all bitterness and misunderstanding and grief. Let my loved ones and all who love be kept in peace until, in a happier

home than any earth affords, my final portion shall be won. Amen.

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Saturday

32. The Spirit's Call

"And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night." John 19:39. Read also John 3:1-18.

Meditation: Perhaps we know too little about Nicodemus to assert dogmatically that he was one whom Jesus saved. At any rate, there are some things in his case that are plain enough and likewise very instructive. Timid and uncertain at first he was. The Gospel came to him, the message of God's love and of the uplifted cross, and he who, out of fear, came to Jesus by night, in the presence of men dared to defend Jesus and then to be found with Jesus' disciples. This fact with others from Christian experience warrants certain dogmatic conclusions. Jesus saves! He supplants timidity with courage, uncertainty with conviction, sin with righteousness, death with life. Skies overhead

may be filled with night, — foes may be fierce, — doubts may assail, — looking to Him, I shall be able to say with Him: "We speak that we do know, and we testify that we have seen."

Prayer: Into my heart come strange whisperings like winds that arise from far places which I do not know. Thy Spirit, gracious God, calls to my spirit. Thou art leading me in ways too wonderful for me into the fullness of that salvation which Thou hast prepared for me since the foundation of the world. In my doubt let me never hold back or turn away. Lead me onward and save me, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Fifth Sunday in Lent

33. Convincing Evidence

"I know whom I have believed." II Timothy 1: 12. Read also Hebrews 11.

Meditation: Perhaps there are many reasons why faith in the Gospel is not easy. No doubt, there are arguments, valid enough in the minds of some, for re-

jecting faith and for asserting that it is unreasonable and unnatural to believe that the Son of God should suffer and die upon a strange cross and that out of that happening forgiveness and redemption should flow, like a mighty stream, for the benefit of all mankind.

But there is another approach to this problem which has far more to recommend it than does any consideration of the matter which dwells chiefly upon the doubts and difficulties that may be involved. As the scientist does when he approaches a problem, so let the student do here, let him gather as much evidence as he can. To be sure, he will give weight to arguments against the proposition that has been set up. At the same time let him not fail to give equal weight and fair consideration to all matters that seem to sustain and verify this proposition. Which evidence is stronger, that which is against or that which is for the matter in hand?

If there are reasons why faith is not easy, there are likewise other reasons why faith in the saving power of Jesus is an absolute necessity. Even though we may not understand its spiritual workings, the reality of salvation is not to be denied when

it comes knocking on our door in the person of some saved individual. Still less is it to be denied when, after we have tried to walk the Master's way and have asked to be permitted to enter into the salvation He meant us to have, we find new interests, new hopes, new peace, a new sense of the nearness of God, yes, an entire new and better life, claiming us. Such evidence dare not be neglected in any court of honest investigation. And once it is admitted, it becomes absolutely compelling and convincing.

George Tyrrell is not speaking as a scientist and yet he is setting forth undeniable scientific evidence for faith in the saving power of the cross when he says: "Again and again I have been tempted to give up the struggle, but always the figure of that strange man hanging on the cross sends me back to my work again."

Prayer: Thou hast not left any nation or people without witness of Thee, great and gracious God, Father of all. To my heart Thou hast spoken in the prayers of my childhood, in the teachings of the Scripture, and in the influence of the church. But with more poignant and powerful appeal Thou hast called me in the words and

deeds of Him whom Thou hast sent to be my Savior. I thank Thee with my whole heart for this loving and gracious call. I thank Thee for the mercy that prompts it and for the salvation that is its great objective. In answer to that call let my heart this day reply: "O Father of mercy, I give myself to Thee for all that I am and for all that I hope to be." Hear my prayer, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"Our lives, our tears, as water,
Are spilled upon the ground;
God giveth no man quarter,
Yet God a means hath found,
Though faith and hope have vanished,
And even love grows dim—
A means whereby His banished
Be not expelled from Him!"—(*Kipling*)

✠

Monday

34. "To Thy Cross I Cling"

"There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other

on the left." Luke 23: 33. Read also Luke 23: 39-43.

Meditation: The salvation that Jesus brings is not a cheap, easy way to escape deserved penalty. It is neither an evasion of justice nor a palliation of sin. What is it? Let the story of the repentant thief tell us. It is an honest bending of the will to the decrees of God. It is not a matter of knowing many things, but a matter of clinging tenaciously to certain truths: that God is merciful; that forgiveness is possible; that God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and that, through Christ Jesus, man may cast off sin and become a new creature. Salvation so conceived is not so much speculative philosophy. It is a practical reality. It is a glorious gift sent from the treasure house of God's love to souls which otherwise were bound to be eternally impoverished by their own sin.

Prayer: Underlying all the world's need is that need which sin has created. This need Thou hast met, O God of great mercy, in the salvation provided in Thy Son, my Savior. Hear my prayer and let that salvation be mine. Into my heart with infinite peace let the assurance come that nothing

shall separate me from Thy love in Jesus Christ. Amen.

✠

Tuesday

35. "To Whom?"

"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6: 68. Read also Romans 8: 32-39.

Meditation: Think of the extremity of the thief on the cross, of the hopelessness of his situation, of the agony of body and mind that must have been his. Think of some such case of human need coming very close to you, some such broken soul appealing to you, if not for some earthly relief, then for some more than earthly hope. If you were kind and meant to help where would you turn for such help? Is it not a fact that there is but one place to which you could turn,—to the Gospel of Jesus? The fact that men in dire distress, again and again, have turned and are turning to this Gospel, is not that a meaningful thing? To quote the words of Stanley Jones, does

it not say very emphatically and very plainly: "There is no one else who is seriously bidding for the heart of the world except Jesus Christ!"

Prayer:

"Just as I am without one plea,
Save that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

"Just as I am, for love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine and Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

✠

Wednesday

36. Honest Thought and Faith

"Truly this man was the Son of God." Mark 15: 39. Read also Luke 23: 34-39.

Meditation: What does it mean that such a Being as Jesus Christ ever should have come into the world? What does it mean

that He should have taught men in words of imperishable kindness and wisdom? What does it mean that His arguments grip the conscience and will not let it go? What does it mean that men, trusting Him, have found peace and new life. If the Roman centurion in charge of the crucifixion, watching Jesus for but a while, soon declared Him to be the Son of God in spite of the bonds of death upon Him, is it not likely that honest thought on my part will lead me to some similar conclusion? If I have doubts and misgivings, if I have not yet satisfied my soul in Him, is not this perhaps the explanation that I have not looked closely enough at His cross to ask myself its meaning and why it was that He was willing to suffer as He did?

Prayer: Blessed Jesus, Thou didst not need to sacrifice Thyself upon the bitter cross, yet Thou didst freely endure all its burden, all its blame, all its shame. Let this sacrifice not be meaningless in my eyes. Let me contemplate it anew. Out of my contemplation, let faith be born,—faith that crowns Thee as the Son of God and my own all-sufficient Savior. Amen.

Thursday

37. Paul's Conversion

"For I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I Corinthians 2: 2. Read also Acts 9: 1-10.

Meditation: Undoubtedly one of the most challenging of all the converts to the cross in early Christian days was the Apostle Paul. It is a long leap from the cruel "consenting" that aided in the stoning of Stephen to the love that is advocated in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Yet in the life of Paul that transition was made and most successfully, too. How was it made? What was the dynamic power that produced it? Surely it is not with becoming grace that any student of psychology should attempt to explain Paul's conversion while ignoring Paul's own explanation, namely, that "Christ in him" wrought this stupendous change. To ignore Paul's own explanation, is not that comparable to asserting that Washington's patriotism and Lincoln's

idealism, after all, were neither original nor honest and that the good that came from them was really nothing more than the purest of accidents?

Prayer: Thou hast changed and redeemed other lives, merciful Savior, and Thou canst change and redeem mine. Put Thy power in my soul. Let it strengthen me in Thy service. And to Thee shall my heart give praise now and evermore. Amen.

✠

Friday

38. Salvation

"Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal Life." II John 5:20. Read also Hebrews 2:1-11.

Meditation: Words, like styles, come and go. Old expressions lose their original meanings and either pass away or come forth strangely changed and renewed. If one word is to be chosen to tell us what

Jesus brought to those who were His disciples, what would that word be? Think of His patience, wisdom, kindness, mercy; of His encouragement, forgiveness, comfort and inspiring power; of the hope He gave and the courage and the wisdom; of the dreams He put into men's hearts, dreams of God and of His love and of a home called heaven! How, now, shall we wrap all that in one package and label it with a single word? When we think of words only one will, even partially, suffice. And faith must enlarge her definition of this word as she uses it. What is the word? Have you formulated it aright in your own heart? Have I? Jesus is the Savior; and the gift He brings to those who are His own is expressed in the old word, so golden in its goodness and so glorious in its promise,—the one word,—salvation!

Prayer: Men argue with words, but in the maze of many words, blessed Master, may I not lose the reality of that salvation Thou didst bring at so great a cost to Thyself. Thou art the Savior indeed. May my heart make an even better confession. May I this day be enabled to call Thee "my Savior." Amen.

Saturday

39. Saving Faith

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." Ephesians 2: 8. Read also Romans 3: 23-31.

Meditation: It is a clear Christian teaching that men are saved from sin, not by what they do for God, but by what God in Christ does for them. And faith to accept such salvation is always the means of attaining it. Thinking of this teaching that we may make test of it, what is the common mark that characterized the spiritual life of all those whom Jesus, in the days of His flesh, dealt with and saved? Is it not, in each instance, child-like faith accepting the truth and the mercy He brought? If that be true,—and the record so clearly declares it is,—how wise and, at the same time, how tender is the appeal Van Dyke has aimed at my heart when he says: "There is a hand stretched out to you,—a hand with a wound in the palm. Reach out the hand of your faith and clasp it, for without faith it is impossible to please God."

Prayer: Thy nail-pierced hand, Crucified One, is extended to me to lift me up out of the abyss of sin. By faith I would grasp it and in love I would hold it. Thus let me gain that spiritual victory which of my own unaided strength I could not hope to win. Amen.

IV. THE INFINITE COST OF SALVATION

Palm Sunday

40. Love Like His

"For the Son of Man came . . . to give His life, a ransom for many." Mark 10: 45. Read also Matthew 21: 1-10.

Meditation: The years have passed, many and long, since Jesus came to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, but they have not served to dim the glory of the sacrifice He made. Love like His, love that sacrifices itself for the object of its affection and for the sake of good it may bring to others, is the secret of all human redemption, the source of all moral progress. To say that He died as our substitute may be too bold or crude an expression for some exacting minds. And yet, when our eyes are open to the deepest truths of life we see that the price of betterment is always sacrifice; that redemption, whenever wrought, comes only when the innocent are willing to bear the burden

of suffering which the guilty have created and deserved to bear; that, in a very literal sense, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is correct when he asserts that "without the shedding of blood" there can be "no remission of sin."

Dr. Claude Montefiore, the Jewish writer, calls attention to the fact that, whereas noble rabbis welcomed the sinner in repentance, Jesus sought the sinner out. He calls this a daring method and a new idea, a new kind of redemption. Montefiore, in this excellent contrast, leads the devout Christian into a higher and clearer appreciation of what the saving work of Jesus is. Yes, Jesus did far more than merely receive the penitent when they came to Him with trembling lips; He sought sinners out before ever they were penitent! Palm Sunday, even in its best aspects, is not a picture of Jerusalem coming to Jesus. Much rather is it a picture of Jesus coming to Jerusalem, and coming in the face of death itself. That willingness to come, that readiness to sacrifice, surely that is not man doing something for God, but God doing something for man; as was said before, love sacrificing itself for the sake of good to others.

The cross is indeed unique and transcends in effect any human effort to do good. Yet, even in a sin-ridden world, are there not certain sacrifices made which serve to strengthen and to establish the truth that underlies that of our salvation? How many a wayward child is reclaimed at last by the sacrificial love of some parent. Shall God be thought of as doing less for mankind than such a parent for a child? Shall God not do far more? And shall I not dare to believe that, since His love is behind the cross, there is saving power there adequate to all my needs?

Prayer: God of mercy and of grace, it is not I who have come to Thee, but Thou who hast come to me. Thou didst come unsought and unbidden. While I was yet in my sin and unwilling to give my heart to Thee, Thou didst love me and didst plan to draw me with the cords of love closer to Thyself. In the patience of Jesus I see Thy patience. In the sacrifice He made I see the heart of Thy sympathy. In the healing that flows from the cross I see Thee still calling to wayward hearts and still cleansing human lives from the taint of sin. Let such grace not be in vain in my life. Nor let me

crucify again by my unbelief and rebellion Him whom Thou hast sent to be my Savior. O save me, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

"He was Himself forsaken that none of His children might ever need to utter His cry of loneliness."—(*Vincent*)

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Monday

41. Life Through Death

"Not My will, but Thine, be done." Luke 22: 42. Read also Philippians 2: 5-12.

Meditation: If Jesus was as truly human as He was divine, life must have been sweet and desirable to Him in those early spring days when He turned His face toward Jerusalem and the cross. By the same reasoning, it could not have been easy for Him to surrender His life as He did. After all, why should He be willing to die like a felon, —He who, for His own sake, needed not to die at all? Yet, behind the necessity of the cross, with His clearer than human vision, Jesus saw an eternal and beneficent purpose

being served. Through His death a new kind of life should come into the world,—a life of obedience toward God, a life of faith purified by forgiveness, a life that all men needed more than any other thing they might desire. The cost was high, but for love's sake He was willing to pay all that might be required. "Not My will, but Thine, be done!" Let me speak those words as He spoke them, and I will see the shadow of night turned into day: a vision of human souls, lost in sin, but now crowned with happiness and holiness that shall never end.

Prayer: O Thou, who, for me, didst bow Thy soul even unto the exceeding great sorrow of death, let me never think lightly of Thy holy sacrifice. In humility of heart let me contemplate it. In sincerity let me seek its meaning. Thus let Thy death bring new life to me and Thy saving will be done. Amen.

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Tuesday

42. Crowned With Thorns

"A crown of thorns upon His head." Matthew 17: 29. Read also Romans 5: 6-11.

Meditation: Jesus, crowned with thorns, scorned and mocked by godless men, is a strange and pitiful picture with which to confront the supposed justice of this world of ours. If I might look beyond the barbarism that wrought this cruelty into the workings of the Providence which might have overruled it but which nevertheless permitted it, what would I see? Would I see God paying a great price simply that He might continue to be a God of love toward men? Would I see unwearying Patience teaching patience, forbearance and forgiveness to restless, revengeful human hearts? In the eyes of the suffering Jesus,—if I might look therein,—those eyes filled with a pathos like that of many tears, would I see the yearning of the divine heart as it continually suffers from and yet ever seeks to serve and to save rebellious men?

Prayer: In Thy patience toward those who abused Thee, O Master of my soul, I see the sacrifice of One who has been made a curse that thereby I might be redeemed and set at liberty. Let such goodness not be in vain. Let it persuade and compel my

soul. Let it lead me to worship and to serve Thee with all the powers I possess. Amen.

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Wednesday

43. When Jesus Forgave His Crucifiers

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23: 34. Read also Psalm 103.

Meditation: Too much time has been spent in inquiring how Jesus, dying for the sins of men, could thereby bring forgiveness and salvation to believing men; and too little time has been spent in contemplating the compelling reality of Jesus actually bringing saving forgiveness into the world. After all, electricity is real and it is exceedingly useful even though no man knows its real nature. And forgiveness is a similar though greater blessing. The "how" and "why" may not be clear to the inquiring philosopher, but the reality of the thing itself and the blessing it brings are facts not to be set aside. Jesus forgives! He forgives His crucifiers! Since the day He

did that the world has been different; something has come into it that man never had before, a something that enables every penitent and conscience-stricken sinner in the world to lift his heart to God, to ask for forgiveness and to dare to hope that, for Christ's sake, he will receive the gift he needs.

Prayer: Mindful of Thy mercy even toward those who crucified Thee, I dare to lay at the foot of Thy cross, blessed Savior, all the sinfulness and unworthiness of my life. Forgive me for Thy mercy's sake. Lift me up and save me. In Thee let me find peace and pardon, even that salvation which Thou didst bring. Amen.

V. HIS SAVING POWER TODAY

Maundy Thursday

44. The Sacramental Feast

"Take, eat, this is My body." Matthew 26: 26. Read also I Corinthians 11: 23-34.

Meditation: The saving power of Jesus Christ has perpetuated itself through the centuries and is an active, blessed reality in the world today. Men may argue as they please as to how the Savior could say of the bread in the sacrament: "This is My body," and how He could speak of the wine and say: "This is My blood." And yet, in the face of all human doubt and objection, His body once broken and His blood once shed are still serving the souls of men for good. At the sacramental table the Savior is still met by those who desire to find Him. His Spirit still speaks to their spirits. Drawn away from the sins of earth, they are lifted up into the life that is of God. A mysterious rite? Yes, but behind it there is a

great simplicity,—the effort of a patient God who never grows weary in seeking to save those whom sin has cast down.

Prayer: Break unto me, blessed Jesus, the bread of life that I may hunger no more. Refresh me with the wine of life that I may thirst no more. Let Thy Spirit dwell within my heart to make all things plain and to lead me in the way of everlasting life, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

THE INFINITE COST OF SALVATION
(Concluded)

Good Friday

45. "Bought With a Price"

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark 15: 34. Read also Isaiah 53: 1-12.

Meditation: Upon the cross He hangs,—He whose life has been given to helping and saving men. Deep shadows have fallen, but shadows not as deep as those that now cover His soul. A convulsive shudder stirs His weary body. His parched lips gasp for breath. He cries aloud, out of the depths of a misery incomprehensibly great,—how will my soul ever forget that cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No mere academic discussion can explain this tragedy. Only faith can understand it, faith which sees the love of God overshadowing all the sin of this world and shunning no sacrifice in an effort to make redemption a glorious reality for all. Let

faith speak within my heart as Calvary's hill is slowly veiled in night and this will be her message: "You are bought with a price; —the price of infinite suffering;—the price of an unending solicitude and love;—the price of the life of the Son of God Himself!"

Prayer:

"Upon that cross of Jesus
Mine eyes at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart with tears
Two wonders I confess—
The wonders of His glorious love
And my unworthiness!"

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Saturday

46. At Rest

"And when Joseph had taken the body . . . he laid it in his own tomb." Luke 27: 59-60. Read also Luke 27: 50-66.

Meditation: He rests within the quiet tomb. His work is done and well won is

His rest. Sleep, blessed Jesus, while angels watch and wait. Sleep, bravest of warriors, Thou, who, for love's sake, didst endure the very sharpness of death. Sleep and rest and refresh Thy soul in kinder realms than any earth affords, though now Thy faithful weep, not knowing the glories the morrow shall bring. On this quiet day let me possess my soul in patience and in hope. God's love is mightier than man's sin. He that redeemed me with the blood of His own Son will not suffer my foot to be moved. He will not allow me to fail of the final victory. In that assurance let me close my eyes this night, comforted, unafraid and joyously expectant.

Prayer: Amid all the sorrow and pain and death of this world, give me, gracious Father, the sure vision of faith. Beyond the darkness let me see the Eternal Light, the Dayspring from on high. Beyond all death may I see Thee, the Giver of life, my God and Saviour forever. Amen.

VI. FINAL FRUITS OF SALVATION

Easter Day

47. Eternal Life

"Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14: 19. Read also Mark 16: 1-8.

Meditation: When Jesus Christ arose on Easter Day the thing happened which ought to have happened. If it was a miracle that He arose, it would have been a greater miracle if He had not arisen. After all, God is not finally to be frustrated by evil. Neither is He going to allow goodness to do its work in this world at an infinite cost and then to be snuffed out like a candle light. God is God, and He is good, and His mighty arm is outstretched to save those whom Christ has redeemed. Once let our minds dwell on these facts and Easter becomes, not a strange accident, but a gracious necessity; not a mystery challenging our minds to unravel it, but a clear manifestation of mercy in full keeping with the

saving purpose which brought the Risen Lord into this world in the first place.

Jesus, risen from the dead, becomes a partaker of the life beyond. He is a changed Jesus and yet not greatly changed. He loves His own as ever. He can be touched by the hands of Thomas, and He can tenderly inquire of Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest Thou me?" He speaks to His disciples and says: "Peace be unto you." What do these things mean? Do they not tell my heart some further truths I greatly need to know? Do they not seem to say that the life beyond is closer than I may have thought,—that the love that binds heart to heart here is the same love that shall bring hearts together there,—that the life beyond, instead of being a thing to fear, is a thing that we ought to love and long for and prepare for in the best way we can?

Say what we will to excuse ourselves, we people do not dwell often enough in our thoughts upon that home which Jesus has prepared for us. Too often we act as though death and evil were mightier than the goodness of God and the love of Jesus Christ. Look out, weary heart of mine, upon the great, budding world, crowned as it is today with the rich life of the spring-

time;—shall not He who gives recurring spring be able to raise you up when finally for you earth's short day is ended? Look beyond the fields of earth into heavenly spheres where angelic songs are swelling;—shall not the God of peace, who brought hither from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, perfect also in you this same good work, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight?

Prayer: I thank Thee, mighty God, most merciful Father, for Thy love so convincingly, so tenderly, so gloriously proven in Easter. Jesus lives. The powers of evil are broken. Salvation is full and free for all, salvation that shall make men strong and true for the battles of life, salvation that shall lead their souls in peace into brighter and better realms of life beyond. Let Thy salvation come to me with all its power and beauty. Let it endow my life with Christlike virtue. Let it bring me and all who love Thee safely into the shelter of Thy eternal home. Hear my prayer, for the sake of Him whom Thou didst raise from the dead. Amen.

"Christendom never came from an unbroken grave. . . You can explain Christen-

dom, churches and literature if Christ rose again; but otherwise they cannot be explained at all. Our whole civilization rests on the broken cross of the Master, and it is incredible that a civilization like this . . . has been founded on a lie."—(*Storrs*)

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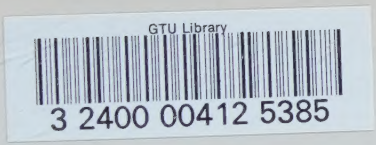

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